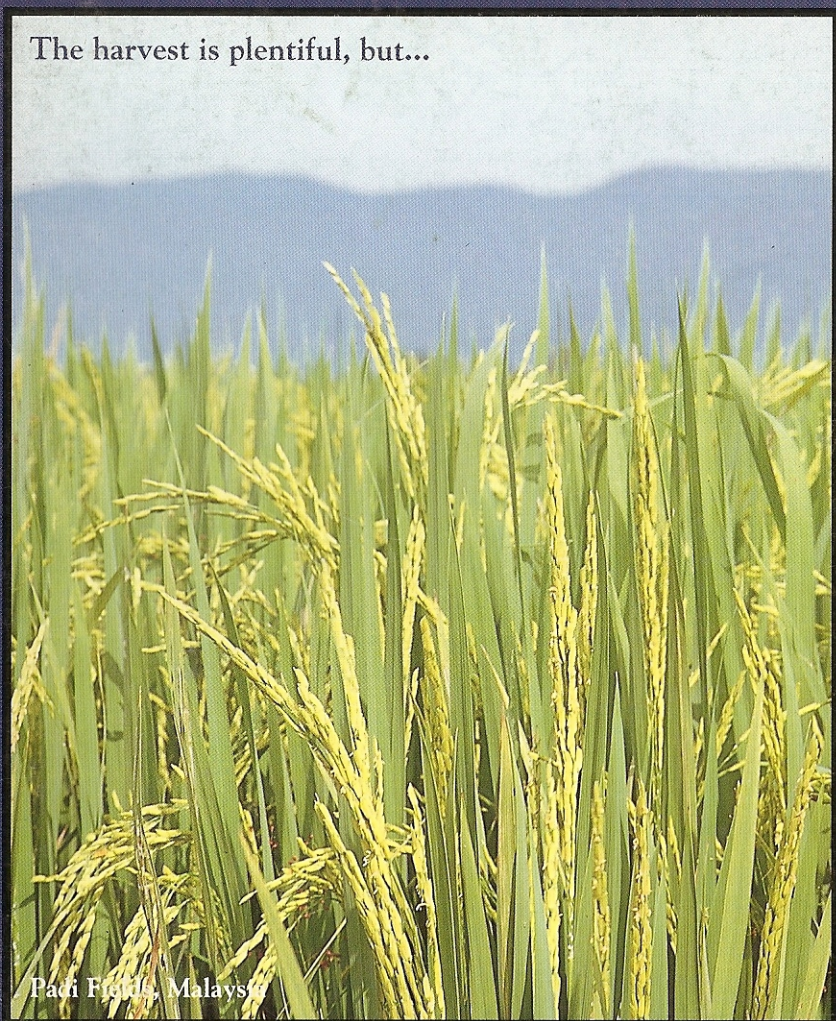


manoa

The harvest is plentiful, but...



Padi Field, Malaysia

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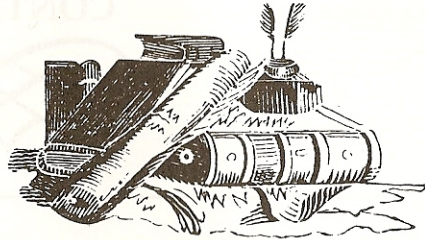
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Editorial



Thanks be to God that the International Assembly of the True Jesus Church ("IA") is twenty-five years old this year. The IA has made some progress under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the able leadership of our ministers. The truth has reached the black continent of Africa and the Philippines, a Catholic country. The Southeast Asia Theological College in Singapore has been set up. It now conducts courses for those aspiring to be full-time preachers. Another similar college is in the process of being set-up in the USA. A translation centre has been set up in the USA for the purpose of producing publications in various languages.

The IA is funded by contributions from all the national general assemblies, IA directed churches as well as individuals. There is sufficient fund for ongoing projects but not enough for special ones, like sending more missions to Africa or purchasing a computer for the Department of Literary Ministry in Singapore. Perhaps IA should consider other sources of funds or other ways to raise funds.

King David asked his people to offer up their possessions to God 全民奉献 for the building of the Temple (1 Chron 29:14). Perhaps the IA may consider appealing to every believer, in addition to every national general assembly, for funds.

Let us assume that we have 70,000 believers and about half of them are working people. If each working believer offers S\$0.50 (the cost of a cup of black coffee) a day, then IA can collect S\$525,000 per month or S\$6,300,000 per

year! With this 6.3 million Singapore dollars income, IA can do a lot of divine work. We can set up many missionary outposts in Africa, Argentina, India, the Philippines and Thailand. We can also set up more theological colleges to train more preachers.

In this issue of Manna, we have "A Note to Church Leaders" written by a UK believer. It is a good reminder to one and all who is working for the Lord to appreciate each other and to nurture the young charges with patience and care. "Press On To Know The Lord" is an adaptation of a sermon spoken by Dn Meishi Tsai during his brief stay in Singapore while he was lecturing in the Southeast Asia Theological College recently. "A Case Of Spiritual Prosecution" ends up the truth is the winner. It is our intention to include a section for Bible study from this issue onwards. The first is on the epistle to Philemon. "Nutrition and Good Health" is the excerpt of an interesting article contributed by Dn Paul S. Wong. Please also read "Pride" if you do not wish to fall prey to it.

Singapore
October 1992



A CASE OF SPIRITUAL PROSECUTION

John 8:3-11 records the Scribes and Pharisees bringing unto Jesus a woman caught in adultery. According to the law of Moses she should be stoned to death. But they asked Jesus what they should do with her with intent to trap Him little realizing that they were also sinners themselves. They were pricked by their conscience when Jesus said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."

The Prosecutors

They caught a woman committing adultery. Under the law of Moses, she should be stoned to death (Deut 22:20-24). Since there was a law to punish such an accused why did they not apply it? Why should they ask Jesus to judge the case? Jesus was neither their ruler nor a member of the Sanhedrin. Their evil intention was to present a dilemma to Jesus. If the Lord were to forgive the woman then He would be breaking the law of Moses. On the other hand, if the Lord were to follow the law by condemning the woman then He would not be acting according to the gospel He was preaching. Further he would also be breaching the law of the Romans. However the trickery of the Scribes and

Pharisees could not fool Jesus. Instead the words of Jesus, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her," were as sharp as a knife. They were cut in their hearts and realized that they too were sinners. God is faithful and just. If we confess our sins He will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The Accused

The adulterous woman was totally passive. She lost her freedom and was stricken with guilt. Brought before the Lord, she waited for her death sentence. Fear and shame overtook her. She was no longer able to lift her head. According to the law of Moses she should be stoned to death but God was gracious to her. When her accusers had left her one after another, she remained standing there to be judged by the Lord Jesus. When the Lord lifted up Himself and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?" She replied, "No man, Lord." She was troubled in her heart, remorseful and silent. She did not argue with her accusers. She only answered the question the Lord asked and repented before the Lord.

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." So this woman was forgiven of her sin. In this wicked world today the evil one will not spare a moment to accuse us. The devil is like a roaring lion prowling about seeking someone to devour. Therefore we must be steadfast for the blood of the Lamb has cleansed us of our sins. We are no longer of the world but children of God. We should sin no more just as the Lord told the woman.

The Judge

When Jesus heard the accusation He stooped down and with His fingers wrote on the ground as though He had heard nothing. When pressed, the Lord replied, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (Jn 8:7). They could not find fault with this answer. Their evil plan failed.

In Deuteronomy 17:7 it is recorded, "The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people." Stephen died a martyr in this manner. The law of Moses required several witnesses to prove a crime beyond doubt. However the Lord Jesus requested the witnesses themselves to be absolutely sinless. Jesus intended to point out the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees who were harsh on others but lenient to themselves.

The final judgment pronounced by the Lord was "Neither do I condemn thee" (Jn 8:11). God did not send His Son into the world to judge the world (Jn 3:17). Jesus alone is sinless. He alone has authority to forgive sins (Mt 9:6). When Jesus said, "Go, and sin no more", we see His mercy. Any sinner who turns to him must sin no more.

The fact that the truth has to do with our salvation - eternal life after death - we must study the Word diligently. In our daily lives we seek the betterment of our physical lives. Because we are so busy we often neglect things that has nothing to do with our body but with our spirit. The matters regarding eternal life - life after death - are found in the Bible. God moved about 40 people to write His word. This is the truth that God wants us to preach to the world - the gospel of salvation. This is the will of God. And one who comes into contact with His word will receive illumination. He who understands its teachings is truly a blessed man.

To strive, to press on, is a human activity. The Chinese has a legend of a man called "Kua Fu" who ran after the sun. From dawn to dusk this man followed the path of the sun. Over vales and mountains, over seas and oceans, this man ran after the sun. To him there was no night. It was always day. Soon he became tired and collapsed. Just before he breathed his last, he told the people around him, "It is my life-long ambition to follow the sun

and I hope that others will also share my ambition." Human beings race against time hoping that their lives will be as long as the sun's. But it is impossible. We may be of royal or noble birth or we may be paupers but in the end we all die. We will not be able to race against time or follow the sun.

If you were to examine history you will find many great and noble men. But where are they now? One day when we lie in the cold earth under stones bearing our

names some may remember us but they will ask the same question, "Where is he?" Whether we are willing or not, whether we are aware or not, every one of us must face death. Before that we all strive for many things. We strive for achievement, success, fame, power, and a comfortable life. Like "Kua Fu" we want to race against time. But in the end we will find that we have striven in vain. This is a fact. No matter how long we live - 70 or 80 years if we are strong - what we can boast of in this life is toil, labour and sufferings. Then we just fly away, we have done nothing. We are gone and we are just like a shadow.

**PRESS
ON
To Know
The Lord**

Another Chinese legend tells of a man called "Peng Tzu" who lived for about 820 years. When he was 20 years old he almost died but the "eight immortals" gave him 100 years each and therefore he lived for about 820 years. When he was 820 years old he was to die but the little devils who were searching for him high and low could not find him. They then decided to wash charcoal in a river. Then an old man came and asked, "Little children, what are you doing?" These little devils replied, "We are trying to wash away the blackness of the charcoal." Then this old man said, "In my 820 years of life, I have never heard of such nonsense!" Then these little devils said, "You are the one whom we seek." Even if we can live to 820 years old, there will come a time for us to depart!

The Bible is God's word and all the more it points clearly to this truth. We must examine ourselves and observe human life. After you have left a country for a few years and then return, people may call you big brother or big sister. The second time you return, people call you uncle or aunty. And when you come back the third time, you may be an older uncle or an older aunty. The fourth time you come back, you become an old man or an old woman with grey hair, shaky hands and legs. This is a fact. Something unavoidable. You may be strong with great vitality but a few decades more perhaps you also will find your teeth chattering, your eyes dimming and your hair going grey. If we were to view human life in this light it seems to be very sorrowful, really hopeless. And if you were to look at the papers these days, you will find that human life is really dismal. Many are distressed. Many commit suicide. Even in Singapore! Why is it that in this small island country where everybody strives to be the best and yet we have people who are so disappointed with life? Because life is toil and suffering. It is emptiness. This is the true picture of human life. A Nobel prize winner's last words before he took his own life were: "Oh, human life!" In 1960, in a Taiwanese university, a few young people committed mass suicide. Human life without God is truly empty.

We must not have the wild ambition of "Kua Fu" to strive against time and trying to run after the sun. Birth, old age, sickness and death are human realities. Amongst my classmates, some died in their first or second year in college of liver disease. They left the world without receiving the Word of life. When I look back, I feel sorrowful. So let us seize the opportunity to study

human life. Strive, press on, to know God and to understand the problems of human life. When a man finds life in God, receives life from God, his life will be meaningful and valuable unlike that of "Kua Fu".

Hosea 6:3 says, "Let us know, let us press on to know the Lord, the true God". We must press on to know Him. His going forth is as sure as the dawn, He will come to us as a shower, as a spring rain that waters the earth. The morning sun gives us warmth, light and hope after the darkness of night. If the world does not have the sunlight of dawn, there will be no sign of life. Because there is light of dawn we begin our day in the morning with liveliness and hope. The dew and spring rain give great joy to those who have been living in areas afflicted with drought. To the Jews, who were the chosen people of God, the light of dawn and the spring rain were something very much desired. The coming of God can be compared to the coming of dawn's light and the coming of spring rain because it gives us life and hope. The coming of God will nourish our soul which is like dry land. The Bible makes use of these two imageries to tell us of God's great love and His salvation. If in our lives there is a famine, there is a drought, then we need the rain that God gives. Do you find that your life is bleak and dark? Then you need the salvation of God.

In Luke 1:78-79 the Bible tells us that the tender mercy of God is just like the day that dawns on us so that He may guide those who sit in darkness - those who still have not received the gospel of salvation - to lead them out of the shadow of death to the way of peace and life. When a person knows God and believes in the gospel, he will be saved from darkness into light. In this life there will be peace because he has walked out of darkness upon the way of God. Similarly, the Word of God is like the dew and the rain which nourish the ground. Those who have been to the wilderness of Judea will understand this. Travelling from Jerusalem southward towards Jericho and down the slope the land is dry ground. If there is a storm, on the following day, the ground will still be as dry as the day before. There may be some signs of wetness but after a while it will be just as dry. The wilderness of Judea is that dry. It needs continuous rainfall to convert it into a fertile plain.

The prophet Isaiah knew about this. God told him that man needs the Holy Spirit just as the dry ground needs the spring rain. Isaiah 32:15 says that

the Spirit of God is poured upon us from on high. The human heart needs nourishment. The autumn and spring rain, and also the light of dawn represent the mercy and tenderness of God. Hosea tells us to press on to know the Lord and we will receive these things. Your life will be transformed. You will walk out of darkness into light. Out of the cold dead world, you will walk into the warmth of the world of life when the Holy Spirit is poured upon you. Your life will be changed. You will be transformed into a spiritual person.

The person whom we want to seek is the only true God, the one who has created all things. God is changeless. Humans are limited by time and space. But God transcends time and space. To Him the past is the future; and the future is the past. To Him, the past, present and future come together. Religion is not books. Religion is life. It can be experienced. The Bible says that God's Word is the Word of life. God is someone whom we can seek and can find. Science seeks experiments and verifications. Theories must be proven. Religion transcends science. It penetrates the deepest recesses of the human heart. Religion is something that your heart, your innermost being, your emotion, can experience.

You can experience God when you receive the Holy Spirit. Many today in the church have received the Holy Spirit. If you seek God, you too will receive the Holy Spirit. This is a true and living faith.

How to know God? John 4:23-24 tells us that God is Spirit. We exist in the physical realm. We who are flesh and blood can scarcely understand things in the spiritual realm. How can we know the invisible God?

1 Timothy 6:12 says that God exists in unapproachable light. God is beyond the grasp of man. About 6 months ago, an unmanned space ship passed the last planet of the solar system, Uranus. Beyond that we do not know where it is going. The universe keeps on expanding. To go to the edge of universe, it takes about 10 billion light years. If you were to lift up your head to see the stars at night, some of them may be already non-existent. The Bible says that God lives in unapproachable light. How then can we press on to know Him?

First, God became flesh. He came into the world as a human being so that we can see and experience Him. Second, Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sake, resurrected and ascended to heaven. After that He sent the Holy Spirit to us. Third, He will come again as the Lord of Judgment. He will reward the good and punish the wicked. Those who believe in the Lord will be received into their eternal home in heaven. So, today, if we want to know God we must look to Jesus and experience the Holy Spirit.

John 1:1-14 tells us that in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. This Word, the creative power of God, manifested itself in a form which many can see. Before the Word came into the world it has existed from time immemorial. It is God. When the Word came into the world in human form he became God incarnate. From the very beginning He is the light of life. He is the true light that enlightens every man. He is the light which is above all and gives life to all. He is the light that gives us conscience and the sense of the good. He is the holy light. We know that the world was created through Him and by Him but ironically the world did not accept Him. He came to His own people - the Jews - but they did not receive Him. Those who receive Jesus have the right to become children of God.

Eternal life is promised to each and every one of us. John 5:24 says, "Truly, truly I say to you, he who hears my word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life, he does not come into judgment but has passed from death to life." He who hears the words of Jesus Christ and believes in Him has eternal life. John 5:25 states, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the hour is coming and now is when they shall hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live." In the eyes of God he who has not been born of water and the Spirit is dead. But if we hear the voice of the Lord and are baptised, we shall receive the Holy Spirit and live!

PRIDE

Proverbs 16:18 says that pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before stumbling. Many great people in the past fell because of pride. The Bible also records many such incidents. As children of God, we should be on guard against pride lest we fall prey to it.

King Nebuchadnezzar

A humble person will be welcomed by all whereas a proud man will not only be rejected by people but by the merciful God as well. Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king, on seeing that his kingdom was strong and enjoying prosperity became very proud. When he was walking in his palace he said proudly, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power and for the honour of my majesty?" Hardly had he finished his words, the judgment of God immediately came to him saying, "O King Nebuchadnezzar to thee it is spoken, 'The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field : they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.'" The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar : and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his

body was wet with dew of heaven, till his hairs grew like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws" (Dan 4:29-33). Thus, King Nebuchadnezzar was punished by God for his pride.

King Uzziah

Uzziah, king of Judah, was crowned at the age of 16. He ruled for fifty-two years. In the beginning he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord according to all that his father Amaziah did. God blessed King Uzziah and so he became prosperous. But when he was strong he became proud and he transgressed against the Lord God by going into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of the incense - an act which only the priest could do. When stopped by Azariah the priest, together with some other priests of the Lord, King Uzziah became angry and went ahead to burn incense. Then he was afflicted with leprosy. He died shamefully a leper (2 Chron 26:1-5, 16-21).

Haman

Proverbs 15:25 says, "The Lord will destroy the house of the proud." King Ahasuerus of Persia promoted Haman above all his other ministers. Haman became so proud that he made everyone passing the king's gate to bow and pay homage to him. However a Jew named Mordecai, ministering at the king's gate, paid no such homage to him. Haman became furious. He plotted to kill Mordecai and also to annihilate the entire Jewish race. But God did not allow such an evil plan to succeed. Queen Esther revealed the evil scheme of Haman to King Ahasuerus. The king was very angry and commanded Haman to be hung on the gallows which he had made for Mordecai. Haman's estate was given to Esther and in the end Haman's children were also sent to the gallows by the Jews (Esth 8:10, 9:13-14).

Causes of Pride

Wealth : The ancient Chinese has this saying: "Wealth breeds pride, comfort accompanies sorrows." Moses told the Israelites patiently when they were in the desert east of the Jordan River saying, "Beware that thou forget not

the Lord thy God, in not keeping His commandments, and His judgments and His statutes, which I command thee this day : Lest when thou hast built goodly houses, and dwell therein : And when thy herds and thy flocks multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied : Then thy heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt from the house of bondage" (Deut 8:11-14).

Wealth can make one proud. No wonder Agurs in his prayer said, "Remove far from me vanity and lies : give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me : Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, 'Who is the Lord?' or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain" (Prov 30:8-9). Paul was fully aware of this. In his first letter to Timothy he told him to charge those that were rich in this world that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God who gave them richly all things to enjoy.

Status : Moses told the Israelites to take note of a few things when they entered into Canaan. One of them was how a king should conduct himself. He said, "And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites : And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life : that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes to do them : That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left : to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children, in the midst of Israel" (Deut 17:18-20). When one holds a high position, he can become proud easily. Haman and Uzziah were classic examples.

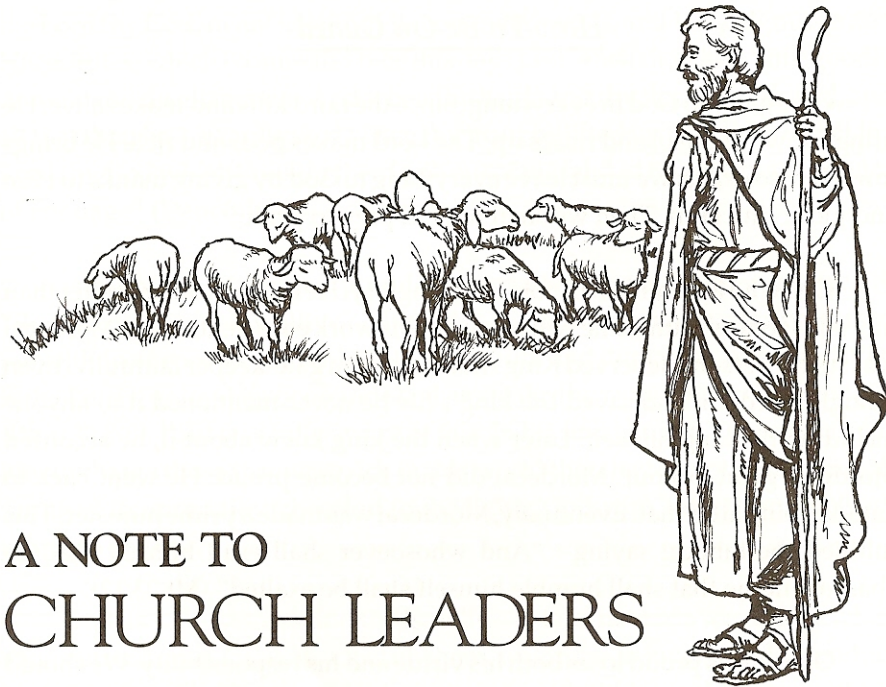
Success : When one is successful he can become complacent and egotistical. When King Herod had finished speaking to the people of Tyre and Sidon, they gave a shout saying, "It is the voice of God, and not of a man." Herod was carried away by the flattery and he did not give glory to God. Immediately the angel of the Lord smote him and he was eaten to death by worms (Ac 12:20-23).

How To Be On Guard

Give glory to God in everything. Since the Lord kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up; The Lord makes poor and rich; He brings low, He also exalts; we must leave everything to God by giving thanks to Him and glorifying Him. Then we shall not fall prey to pride.

One who is humble will not seek vainglory. He esteems others better than himself. If one is humble he will carry out his work conscientiously. Mordecai was such a person. He served King Ahasuerus as a gate-keeper faithfully. Even though Mordecai had saved the king's life he never mentioned it to anyone including the king himself. Later when the king knew about it, he accorded Mordecai great honour. Mordecai did not become proud. He went back to gate-keeping after that. Eventually, Mordecai was made a prime minister. This fulfilled the biblical saying : "And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased, and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Mt 23:12).

One who is proud loses both his virtue and his responsibility. We should work out our own salvation with trembling and fear. Be always on guard against falling prey to pride lest we be punished by God.



A NOTE TO CHURCH LEADERS

Youths are future pillars of the church. They will have to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century and to shoulder the task of preaching the Gospel to an increasingly decadent and immoral world. Charged with such a heavy duty, these future soldiers of Christ have to be equipped with the full armour of God before they can step out onto the battle-field. The church has the responsibility of providing the necessary training to ensure that they will be victorious in their mission.

However let us look at those who are to train up the younger generation. They must set a good example for others to follow. A good shepherd must walk in the steps of the ultimate role model - the Lord Jesus Himself.

Even as a child, the Lord Jesus demonstrated His zeal and love for His Father's house. When quizzed by

Mary over His disappearance during a trip to Jerusalem, His reply was, "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Lk 2:49). There are many of us who also showed this fervour in the beginning. We might have eagerly gathered to worship God and to serve Him. However, as time passed, we have forgotten the real purpose behind working for God. Our service may be done grudgingly out of obligation to those around us.

There is also the danger that we may spend increasingly more time attending to our own affairs. It is all too easy to begin drifting towards the world and to invest more time and energy in the name of earning a decent living. It is ironical that a person can spend his whole life pursuing the optimal standard and never find it. He is a wise person who can see through the vanity of life and devote himself instead to what is really worthwhile - living for Christ. This does not mean abandoning our jobs and careers. It simply means doing our part to provide for the needs of ourselves and our family but leaving sufficient time and energy to serve God. God will remember our efforts. Through Jesus, He has promised that those who seek after His Kingdom and righteousness will have lack of nothing (Mt 6:33). What God wants from His people is for them to centre their lives on Him. If we, as the shepherds in the household of God, do not strive to live up to this standard, we would lose all credibility when we attempt to instruct our young charges on how to live a godly life.

The members who make up the household of God come from a great diversity of social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Everyone is truly an individual. Our personalities are shaped to a large extent by our own experiences, environment and upbringing. Yet we all share the most important matter in our lives - our faith in God. One could argue that it is almost inevitable that differences of opinion will arise in this community of faith. These differences could actually be quite constructive where everyone contributes his ideas for the benefit of the church ministry. However problems may arise when individuals are unwilling to accept others' opinions and suggestions, believing their own to be better. Herein lies the cause of strife and disharmony in a Christian community.

The workers of God have to learn to accept and respect each other so that everyone can work in unity. We all need to value other people's opinions, and to give way when necessary. In so doing, we will show our young charges the real meaning of unity and harmony in the household of God. Elder Peter had earlier referred to this basic Christian principle as the mutual respect and submission between the young and the old (1 Pet 5:2-4).

How we treat the younger members in the church is important as our attitudes and actions will leave a deep impression on them. We should avoid imposing our ideas, methods and values on them when these have no bearing on the truth. We do not dominate, but guide them with love, encouraging them to grow and to develop their own talents and abilities with which to serve God. When they make mistakes, we correct them with gentleness. To achieve such a good working relationship there must be free communication and rapport. We have to be genuinely interested in our young charges, ever ready to listen to them, to appreciate and value their opinions and concerns. In this way we can facilitate the exchange of ideas and experiences.

During His ministry, Jesus was anxious to correct the disciples' misconception concerning the role of a teacher. Jesus taught them that He, their teacher, had come to the world not to be served but to serve (Mt 20:26-28). He communicated this point very clearly when He washed their feet (Jn 13). In the same way, the Lord Jesus has shown us, as overseers of the church, that we should utilise our gifts in the service of others as opposed to expecting others to meet our needs.

It is essential that we pass on the ethos of service to the younger members. They need to learn that within the church there is no hierarchy and that all are equal before God. But first, we, the shepherds, have to set an example by serving those around us with meekness and sincerity.

The task of shepherding the next generation is a great responsibility. It can be difficult. However our Heavenly Father is compassionate and knows our strengths and our limitations. He does not demand from us what we cannot achieve. What is important is that we discharge our responsibilities to

the best of our abilities. In our every day lives, we should be vigilant to ensure that the matters of God always take precedence over our own affairs. Also, in our training of the future workers we should not dominate them. Rather, we should gently lead and direct them with love and patience. More importantly, we should set a good example for our young charges to emulate. Then when our work is completed, we will have left behind a good foundation for the next generation.

Cornelius

There was a certain man in Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian cohort. Caesarea was located in the Province of Samaria. Under the Roman empire, Caesarea was the capital of Palestine. The Roman empire had five battalions of soldiers stationed there. Each battalion consisted of about 600 soldiers. Of the five battalions four consisted of Palestinian. Only one battalion consisted of Romans national and they were known as the Italian cohort. Cornelius was a centurion in that cohort. He was a devout man, a proselyte to Judaism.



The conversion of Cornelius to Christianity was made possible through Peter by the guidance of God (Ac 10:3-48). Peter and Cornelius were total strangers. They lived far apart from each other. The meeting of Peter and Cornelius was a significant event. It was through this meeting that the first gentile church was set up.

God is not partial

The laws of Moses distinguished clean food from unclean food (Lev 11:1-47; Deut 14:3-20). The Lord Jesus abolished this distinction declaring all food clean (Mk 7:19). In a vision, Peter saw all kinds of four-legged animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air. And a voice called Peter to kill the animals and eat. Since the law of unclean food was abolished, the Jews who once abstained from taking unclean food could from then on associate

with the gentiles and eat meals with them. Therefore, on seeing Cornelius Peter said to him immediately, "Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company or come unto one of another nation; but God had shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore, came I unto you without raising any objection when I was sent for" (Ac 10:28-29). Here it is noteworthy that Peter addressed Cornelius and his friends as people from "another nation" and not "gentile". Opening his mouth, Peter said, "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right, is welcome to Him."

Here, Peter pointed out two important teachings. First, God is not partial to anyone. Second, the word of the Lord Jesus is the gospel of peace. Concerning the gospel of peace Paul has explained it in great detail in Ephesians 2:11-22. There are two verses to take note: "For He Himself is our peace who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall" and "He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near". Paul called the preaching of the gospel of peace a mystery which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel" (Eph 3:5-6).

Concerning God's impartiality, Paul explained further by saying that he was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. For it was the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jews first and also to the Greek. Both the Jews and the Greek stand as equals as regards salvation. God is also impartial in judgment. God will render to every man according to his deeds: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jews first and also of the Greek, but glory and honour and peace to every man who does good, to the Jews first and also the Greek. For there is no partiality with God (Rom 2:6-11).

Who is a Jew?

To Paul a Jew was not a Jew who was one outwardly; and circumcision was not that which was outward in the flesh. But he was a Jew who was one inwardly; and circumcision was that which was of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise was not from men, but from God. The royal priesthood, an honoured position once given to the Israelites during the Old Testament period (cf Ex 19:5-6) is now given to the believers of the Lord.

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people but now you are the people of God, you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy” (1 Pet 2:9-10). Paul said, “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female : for we are all one in Christ. And if ye be Christ’s then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal 3:26-29).

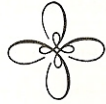
Before Cornelius believed the Lord he had three virtues which pleased God very much.

First, he and all his house feared God. Cornelius was not only a devout man himself. He influenced his household and his soldiers to be God fearing (Ac 10:7). He even shared the vision he saw with his soldiers. His servants openly praised him before Peter by saying that Cornelius was a just man (Ac 10:22). Also, before Peter arrived, Cornelius had already invited his kinsmen and close friends to listen to Peter’s words. And they were filled with the Holy Spirit and were baptized. We too must, like Cornelius, bring our relatives and friends to fear God.

Secondly, Cornelius gave alms. Despite being a Roman centurion, Cornelius did not despise the Jews. He loved them and gave alms to them. It was rare for a Roman official to treat the Jews that well. In this connection, the

Bible teaches that one who is generous and gives alms will be remembered by God and favoured by men (Ac 9:36-41; Ps 112:5-6; Prov 22:9; Lk 12:33-34; Gal 6:9-10).

Thirdly, he prayed constantly. The Jews in those days prayed three times daily at 9.00 o’clock in the morning, at 12.00 o’clock at noon and at 3.00 o’clock in the afternoon (Ac 2:15, 10:9, 10:3). David and Daniel prayed three times a day (Ps 55:16-17; Dan 6:10). Some prayed seven times a day (Ps 119:164). The prayers of the saints are like incense which rises before God. In his prayers, the angel of the Lord told Cornelius that his prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God (Ac 10:4). As believers, we should be like Cornelius and do more good deeds and pray often.



PHILEMON

1. **AUTHOR**

Paul (1, 19).

2. **ADDRESSEES**

Philemon, Apphia, Archippus and the church in Philemon's house (1-2).

3. **PURPOSE**

Philemon was a wealthy man brought by Paul to believe in the Lord. Philemon had a servant named Onesimus. Onesimus absconded to Rome where he met Paul, repented and believed in the Lord. Later, Paul sent him back to Philemon. Fearing that Philemon might misunderstand the true intention of Onesimus' conversion, Paul wrote this epistle to Philemon appealing him to forgive and once again receive Onesimus.

4. **PLACE**

A prison in Rome (1, 23; cf Col 4:10). Together with the epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians, those epistles are called collectively "The Prison Epistles".

5. **DATE**

Circa 63 AD.

6. **CONTENTS**

This is a personal epistle. Nonetheless the message is good for the church as a whole. It shows the love in the early church. Paul addressed his fellow Christians as beloved brothers, fellow workers, fellow soldiers, partners and fellow prisoners (1, 2, 17, 23). Paul called a runaway slave a beloved brother of his very heart (16, 12). Paul also wanted Philemon to treat Onesimus the same way as he had treated him. Paul wanted Philemon to forgive the debts owed by his slave as he would forgive the debts owed by Philemon to him. This epistle also discusses the master-slave relationship. Slavery was an institution in both oriental and occidental societies. The mission of the apostles was to preach the gospel and witness for Christ. They would not interfere with political matters. Although Paul did not condemn slavery in this epistle, by sending him back to Philemon and requesting Philemon to treat Onesimus well was an indication that to Paul there was no class distinction. In Galatians 3:28 he wrote : "There is neither Jew or Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female : for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

It was reported that President Lincoln of the United States of America set free some five million black slaves after reading this epistle.

7. **OUTLINE**

Part One - **Introduction (1 - 3)**

- 1) Author (1)
- 2) Addressees (1-2)
- 3) Salutation (3)

Part Two - **Paul's Thanksgiving Prayer For Philemon (4 - 7)**

- 1) He thanked God for his love and faith (5)
- 2) He thanked God for his good deeds (6)
- 3) His joy (7)

Part Three – **Paul Pleaded For Onesimus (8 - 19)**

- 1) Paul need not use authority (8-9)
- 2) Onesimus was a child of Paul during his ministry in prison (10)
- 3) The change in Onesimus (11)
- 4) Onesimus was the very heart of Paul (12)
- 5) The respect of Paul for Philemon (13-14)
- 6) The wonderful arrangement of God (15-16)
- 7) The friendship of Paul and Philemon (17)
- 8) Paul was willing to repay Philemon on behalf of Onesimus (18-19)

Part Four – **Paul's expectation of Philemon (20 - 22)**

- 1) His confidence in Philemon (21)
- 2) His request to Philemon (22)

Part Five – **Conclusion (23 - 25)**

- 1) Greetings (23-24)
- 2) Benediction (25)

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION (1-3)

1) "Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer." (1)

Paul felt that being a prisoner of Jesus Christ was his greatest honour. He did not regard his imprisonment for the sake of Christ as something shameful. He even exhorted Timothy saying, "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner : but be thou partaker of the affliction of the gospel according to the power of God" (2 Tim 1:8). And he boasted about it (cf 2 Tim 2:9; Eph 3:1, 4:1). To be sent to prison for the sake of Christ is a blessing : "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute

you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad : for great is your reward in heaven" (Mt 5:11-12). It will be shameful for one to be sentenced to imprisonment on account of murder, stealing and other acts of wickedness. If we suffer because we are Christians we bring glory to the name of God (1 Pet 4:14-16).

Philemon was a zealous believer who loved the Lord very much (5-7). Paul referred to himself as a prisoner of Christ in this epistle to evoke the compassion of Philemon towards Onesimus for whom Paul was appealing on behalf. Timothy was his fellow worker (2 Cor 1:1; Phil 1:1; Col 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1).

2) "Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer. And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house." (1-2)

This epistle was addressed to Philemon, Apphia, Archippus and the church in Philemon's house.

3) "Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." (3)

This is the form of salutation Paul often used in his epistles (cf Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; Col 1:2; 1 Thess 1:2).

PART TWO: PAUL'S THANKSGIVING PRAYER FOR ONESIMUS (4-7)

Paul in his prayers gave thanks to God on account of Philemon's faith and love. "I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers." Paul often prayed for the believers (Rom 1:9-10; 1 Cor 1:4; Eph 1:16, 3:1; Phil 1:3-4; Col 1:9; 1 Thess 1:2; 2 Thess 1:3). He also requested the believers to pray for him (Eph 6:19-20; Col 4:3-4; 1 Thess 5:25; 2 Thess 3:1). In his letter to Timothy, Paul wrote, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, inter

cessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men" (1 Tim 2:1). Here, Paul emphasizes the importance of intercessory prayers. In our prayers we should remember others or to pray for one another (Jas 5:16). Praying for others is an indication of concern on our part and God will be pleased to grant our requests.

1) "Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints" (5)

Paul thank God for His love and faith. The one who informed Paul accordingly could be Epaphras (cf Col 4:12) or Onesimus himself.

2) "That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus." (6)

Paul thanked God for His good deeds. Paul wished that Philemon would be effective in communicating his faith.

Some do works of charity to gain fame and some to win praises of others like the Pharisees in those days. The heavenly Father will not reward those who do charity with such motives. The Lord Jesus told us: "Take heed that ye do your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven ... But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thy alms may be in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly" (Mt 6:1-4).

3) "For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother." (7)

Paul was overjoyed on hearing the good deeds done by Philemon. He also felt greatly comforted on learning the faith and love of Philemon. Paul had great concern for the believers' faith, love and conduct (cf 1 Thess 3:6-10; Phil 1:25-26; 2 Tim 1:3-4). The greatest joy and comfort of a minister comes from knowing that the believers have strong faith, great love and good conduct. Paul wrote in 2 Thess 2:20, "Because the bowels of the Saints are refreshed by thee, brother" Philemon's love not only made Paul joyful and comforted, all the saints were refreshed as well.

PART THREE : PAUL PLEADED FOR ONESIMUS (8-19)

Here Paul pleaded with Philemon to once again receive Onesimus. Paul gave an account of the change in Onesimus from being "unprofitable" to "profitable". Paul also assured Philemon that he would repay any debt owed by Onesimus.

1) "Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such a one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ." (8-9)

Paul, as the apostle of Christ, could actually use his authority to command Philemon to receive Onesimus but because Philemon was such a kind person who loved the Lord so much, Paul need not exercise his apostolic authority to bring Philemon under submission. He rather urged him to accept Onesimus. Paul pleaded with Philemon saying, "But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were necessity, but willingly" (14). If we could learn to make requests rather than to give order in our daily lives, we will find greater satisfaction in the result.

2) "I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds." (10)

Paul has used the expression "my son" four other times in the gospel (1 Cor 4:17; Phil 2:22; 1 Tim 1:2; Tit 1:4). Since Onesimus was a child of Paul begotten in prison, their relationship must have been intimate. Could Philemon have remained indifferent now that Paul had personally appealed to him.

3) "Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me." (11)

"Onesimus" means "profitable". His name at first seemed inappropriate. He absconded from his master and probably took some money with him. That was why Paul said that in the past he was useless to Philemon but now that he was converted he would be useful to both Paul and Philemon.

Whatever we may be in the past (Rom 6:17; Eph 2:1-3, 4:17-19), now that we are blessed by the Lord we must walk in the Spirit and bear the fruit of light.

We were once servants of sin; now we are servants of righteousness (Rom 6:17-18). We did not believe God, yet we have now obtained mercy from Him (Rom 11:30). We indulged in the lust of the flesh and were by nature the children of wrath but now we have obtained mercy to become children of God (Eph 2:3-6). We were without Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of God but we are now reconciled with Him and are able to come before Him (Eph 2:12-18). We were our old self but now we put on the new man (Eph 4:22-24). We were in darkness but now we walk in the light of the Lord (Eph 5:8). We were defiled, unrighteous but now through the Spirit of God we are washed, sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor 6:9-11). We were enemies of God but now we are reconciled with Him (Col 1:21-22).

4) "Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels" (12)

Such a term was never used by Paul to describe other fellow workers. After believing in the Lord there must have been a great change in Onesimus and Paul had a high regard for him.

5) "Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel : But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly." (13-14)

Philemon obtained much spiritual edification from Paul. Paul could very well have decided to keep Onesimus to serve him but he did not wish to do it without Philemon's consent. Whatever we do we should seek the opinion of others. We should not take it for granted that as ministers in the church we have all the authority to do things according to our wish. We must consult lest we be misunderstood.

6) "For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever; Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?" (15-16)

It may seem a bad thing for Onesimus to have absconded from Philemon, but to Paul he reckoned it as a wonderful arrangement of God. For it was through his escape that he had a chance to be converted. Therefore, Philemon only suffered a small loss now that Onesimus had gone back to him a totally changed person.

Paul wrote that Onesimus was no longer a slave, but more than a slave, a beloved brother. He became a member of Christ's body, a spiritual brother. For, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female : for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28).

7) "If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself." (17)
It is evident that Paul and Philemon were very good friends.

8) "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account; I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it : albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides." (18-19).

Onesimus probably stole his master's money. Paul was willing to repay Philemon whatever Onesimus had taken from him. Paul was a man of love. In his heart he was filled with the love of Christ. Let us imitate Paul as Paul imitated Christ (1 Cor 11:1).

Paul had assured Philemon of Onesimus' worthiness.

Even though Philemon helped Paul physically (5-7, 22) the spiritual instructions Paul had given to Philemon were worth much more. Philemon was still indebted to Paul a great deal. Philemon was fully aware of this. Therefore, Paul said, "Albeit I do not say to thee, how thou owest unto me."

PART FOUR : PAUL'S EXPECTATION OF PHILEMON (20-22)

"Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord; refresh my bowels in the Lord." Philemon could not reject Paul's request. Paul's request was not for his own gain but for the new believer Onesimus. Surely Philemon would accept Paul's request.

1) "Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say." (21)

Paul convinced that Philemon would accede to his request and so he wrote this letter. Paul also believed that Philemon would do more than he had requested him. In Paul's other epistles, he has also written:

a) To the church in Rome, he said, "I also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able to also admonish one another" (Rom 15:14-15).

b) To the church in Corinth, he said, "I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice : having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all" and "I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you in all things" (2 Cor 2:3, 7:16).

c) To the church in Galatia, he said, "I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded; but he that troubleth you shall hear his judgment, whosoever he be" (Gal 5:10).

d) To the church in Philippi, he said, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil 1:6).

e) To the church in Thessalonica, he said, "And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you" (2 Thess 3:4).

2) "But withal prepare me also a lodging : for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you." (22)

The friendship between Paul and Philemon was very intimate indeed. Otherwise, Paul would not have made such a request. "For I entreat that through your prayers I shall be given unto you." Paul was a man of faith. He was not only confident that his own prayers would be answered, he also believed that his request for others to pray for him would be effectual (cf Eph 6:19; Phil 1:19; Col 4:3-4; 2 Thess 3:1-2).

PART FIVE : CONCLUSION (23-25)

1) "There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus. Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers." (23-24)

Besides Paul there were five others who greeted Philemon namely :

a) Epaphras who was a member of the Colossian church, a faithful deacon, a man of prayers, fellow bond servant and prisoner of Paul in Christ Jesus (cf Col 1:7, 4:12).

b) Marcus alias John (Ac 12:12, 25), cousin brother of Barnabas (Col 4:10). Paul and Barnabas separated because of Marcus during one of his missionary journeys (Ac 15:36-39). Now once again, Paul found Marcus very useful (2 Tim 4:11). Mark later became a co-worker of Peter also (1 Pet 5:13).

c) Aristarchus who came from Thessalonica (Ac 27:2), a fellowprisoner of Paul (Col 4:10), a faithful worker who had sailed with Paul to Rome (Ac 27:2).

d) Demas who was originally working with Paul (Col 4:14) but later forsook Paul because he became worldly (2 Tim 4:10).

e) Luke, the writer of gospel and The Acts, a physician who loved the Lord very much. He was also one of Paul's beloved co-workers (Col 4:14). When Paul was imprisoned in Rome about to be martyred only Luke remained with him (2 Tim 4:11).

2) "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen."
(25)

These are words of benediction often used by Paul (cf Rom 16:20; Gal 6:18; Phil 4:23; 1 Thess 5:23; 2 Thess 3:18).

Formula for Peace

Ephesians 4:2-3 says, "With all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Everyone has virtues and vices. We should admire others' virtue and forget others' vices. This helps us to bear with one another and will unite us in peace. If we only look at the vices of others and neglect to acknowledge their virtues, dissensions will arise. Some like to magnify the faults of others but Jesus said, "And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?" (Mt 7:3-4) Some harp on the weaknesses of others. This is uncalled for. When we attack others on their weaknesses, we are actually showing our foolishness because in the eyes of God, we may have greater faults. Besides God, nobody has the right to criticize or to judge others. The Bible says, "And do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment upon those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?" (Rom 2:3).

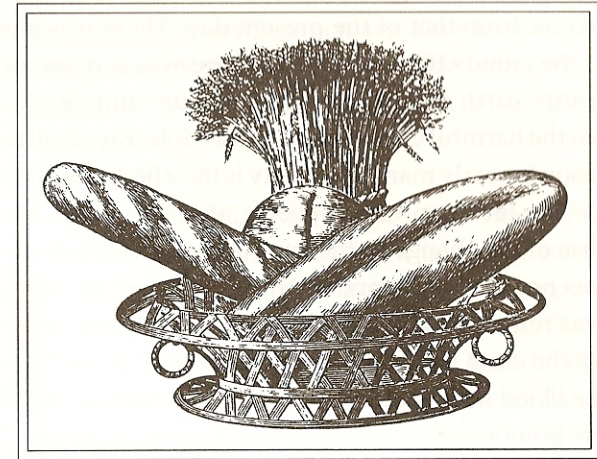
Christians too have conflicts with others in their daily lives. When others wrong us and

Formula for Peace

cause us to suffer in one way or other, we should not retaliate or be depressed. Instead we should show "forbearance for one another in love". This is the standard expected of us in the Bible. As long as we can practise this, we can lead a happy life. However forbearance involves love because without true love there will be no true forbearance. Forbearance is love manifested when others have wronged us. Forbearance is a virtue that must be in all Christians.

To show forbearance for one another in love is to overlook the faults of others and to hide them with love. This is however passive. Active forbearance requires one to learn the virtues of others. The church is a spiritual fellowship of believers. Believers should interact with one another and love one another. No one can isolate him from other brethren and lead a solitary Christian life. No part of the human body can be cut off and still function. We should admire and learn the virtues of others and forget the vices of others. Allow virtues to overshadow vices in order to live in peace.

Nutrition and Good Health



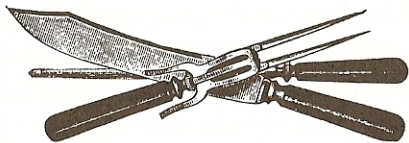
The apostle John wrote to his good friend Gaius, "Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers" (3 Jn.2). From this we understand that Christians should not only be in sound spiritual condition but also in physical condition as well. It is sad to see a Christian having poor health. Our Messiah, Jesus Christ, came not only to save souls but also "went about all the cities and villages, teaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people" (Mt.9:35). Our Lord has shown us very clearly that it is the will of God for His people to have good health. The Messiah became our substitute in sickness and pain. "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53:5).

Learn from the ancient people about longevity and good health

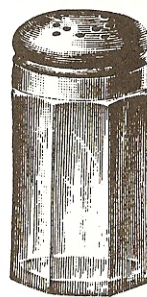
We have often wondered about the life span of our earliest ancestors as described in the book of Genesis. How could they live 800 or 900 years? (Gen.5). Scientists, who have made studies about the living conditions of the people in those days, attribute their longevity to two factors. First, the earth's environment was different from that of the present day. There was a water vapour canopy above the clouds (Gen.1:7). Then there was a misty canopy which watered the entire earth (Gen.2:6). These vapour canopies would provide protection from the harmful Gamma and Ultra-violet rays emitted by the sun. The second reason for early man's longevity is their herbal and vegetarian diet (Gen. 1:29-30). The life span of the people after the Flood was drastically reduced because of the change in the environment and their diet. Before the Flood there was no rain but a vapour canopy covered the earth (Gen.2:5-6). This canopy was removed when "the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights" (Gen 7:11-12). The diet of man after the Flood had included meat which definitely affected his health (Gen.9:3). There is nothing that man can do to restore the vapour canopies but it is within his power to reinstate the diet of his earliest ancestors. The Bible urges us to learn from them. "Wisdom is with aged men, And with length of days, understanding" (Job 12:12).]

God heals man in two ways — Supernatural and Natural

The truth about the healing of our bodies is that God alone is our Healer (Ex.15:26; Psm.103:1-3). There are two basic ways in which God heals. We are constantly amazed at the supernatural miracles which the Lord Jesus Christ performed during His earthly ministry. The power of physical healing is also given to His disciples through one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1Cor.12:9). Then there is a natural way in which God heals our bodies through proper diet and nutrition. When we follow the instructions which God has given us in His word our bodies will receive the healing.



God said, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hos.4:6). One of the reasons why many Christians have poor health is they lack the knowledge of good dieting and proper nutrition which the Bible has much to teach us. The prophet Ezekiel saw this vision. "Along the bank of the river, on this side and that, will grow all kinds of trees used for food; their leaves will not wither, and their fruit will not fail. They will bear fruit every month, because of their water flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for medicine" (Ezek.47:12). The apostle John saw a similar vision for Heaven having the "Tree of Life" with its leaves "for the healing of the nations" (Rev.22:2).



The Bible is replete with verses concerning Plant Food as diet for man. "And you shall eat the herb of the field" (Gen.3:18). "He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, And vegetation for the service of man, That he may bring forth food from the earth" (Psm.104:14). The apostle Paul wrote, "For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables" (Rom.14:2).

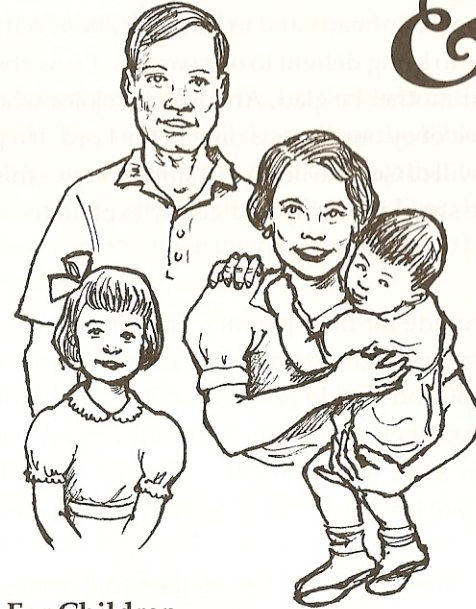
One of the most amazing stories in the Bible about the natural healing is one concerning King Hezekiah (2 Kn.20:1-11). He was sick and on the point of death. After the prophet Isaiah had warned him about setting his house in order, Hezekiah prayed and wept bitterly before the Lord. God then spoke through Isaiah that He would add fifteen years to the King's life. Although God had promised to heal Hezekiah and prolong his life yet the prophet Isaiah told the king's attendants, "Take a lump of figs" (verse 7). "So they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered". Here we read about God's natural healing through the use of Plant Food.

The Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). "If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are" (1 Cor. 3:17). We should be very careful about the food that is consumed in our bodies. Daniel determined that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the

wine (Dan. 1:8). Daniel and his three friends ate only vegetables and water, but "their countenance appeared better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king's delicacies" (Dan. 1:11-16). Plant Food and vegetables have very high nutritional value.

By Paul S. Wong

FOR Children & Parents



For Children

Ephesians 6:1-4 says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. Honour your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth. And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

Children must obey their parents. This is of fundamental importance. To have obedient children is the desired blessing of every parent. A child who does not listen to the teachings of his parents is one with a bleak future.

Proverbs 23:22 says, "Listen to your father who begot you, And do not despise your mother when she is old." However some say "times have changed" or "society has advanced". Many children do not regard their parents at all. When there is a disagreement they would say that their parents are "old fashioned". The Bible has said, "But realise this, that in the last days

difficult times will come. For men will be disobedient to parents" (2 Tim 3:1-2). God's coming is drawing near. When our Lord Jesus was on earth He obeyed His fleshly parents (Lk 2:49-50). We should treat the teachings of our parents like a graceful wreath on our heads and ornaments about our necks (Prov 1:3-9). We should resolve to bring delight to our parents. Proverbs 23:25 says, "Let your father and your mother be glad, And let her rejoice who gave birth to you." However we must obey our parents only in the Lord. If a parent asks his child to go against the will of God - to lie, to worship idol, etc - this child should not obey his parent. He should humbly and gently explain the reason for it. This is true filial piety.

Children should also provide for their parents. The Pharisees thought it was sufficient to offer to God alone without providing for their parents. This is wrong (Mt 15:5-6). Children of God should not neglect their duties towards their parents. They must also treat their parents well. The Bible says, "He who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death," and "He also curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death" (Ex 21:15-17).

Filial children "may live long on earth". This is the promise of God to them. As long as we follow this commandment and be filial to our parents, we will be blessed by God and have long life because God will not fail in His promise (Num 23:14). On the other hand, those who turn their backs on the teachings of their parents will face calamities like the two sons of Eli who refused to heed the advice of Eli and were subsequently killed in battle (1 Sam 2:22-25, 4:11-22), and Absalom who rebelled against his father and was also subsequently killed (2 Sam 15-18).

For Parents

Parents should not abuse their authority - provoking their children so much so that they get angry or lose heart. This does not mean that parents should always indulge their children and spoil them. When a child has done something wrong, the parents should chastise and rebuke him there and then. The Bible says, "Discipline your son while there is hope, And do not desire his death" (Prov 19:18). But discipline him with love and wisdom. Do not be rash and hot-tempered.

Many parents do not set good examples. They gamble, drink, and neglect church services. But they forbid their children from doing what they do. This is one way parents incur the wrath of their children. Further, if parents show partiality they will make the whole household unhappy.

Parents must also bring up the child in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. They must instil the truth of the Bible in the hearts of their children. The Bible says, "Teach the child the way that he should walk, when he grows old, he will not depart from it" (Prov 22:6). If parents do not instruct their children properly when they are young, it will be too late if they hope to correct them when they are older.

One of the reasons why Timothy was a good worker of God was that his grandmother and mother taught him from young to understand the truth (2 Tim 1:5, 3:14-15).

Besides instructing their children in the Lord, parents must also discipline them in the Lord because the discipline of the truth will always govern the hearts of the children, ensuring that they will walk on the correct way and that they will not slip and fall (Ps 37:31, 119:165; Prov 3:21-23). When Joseph was sold to Egypt, he was brought into the house of Potiphar. The mistress tried to seduce him and cause him to sin but he said, "How can I commit this great evil against God?" The words of God controlled his heart (Gen 39).

On the sense of SUPERIORITY



The Bible teaches, "Let each of you regard one another as more important than himself" (Phil 2:3).

A common weakness of man is pride - the sense of superiority. The Jews look down on the gentiles, some races discriminate against other races, the rich despises the poor. This should not be so. One who has received much from the Lord should be humble. The higher a bird flies the smaller it appears. One who feels that he is superior to others is self-righteous. We can see this in the prayer of the self-righteous Pharisee. He boasted about his good deeds and demeaned the tax collector. But the Lord said that the tax collector was more justified than the Pharisee (Lk 18:9-14).

The glorious Lord, the Saviour, "though He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant and being made in the likeness of man. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross" (Phil 2:6-8). This is the best example of humility that the Lord has left for us.

A Testimony On Divine Revelation Through Dreams Revealed To Me During My Short Visit To Taiwan

(29 July —12 August 1992)

In the name of the Lord Jesus I bear witness.

Soon after I enrolled to join the trip to Taiwan to attend the dedication of the New G.A. cum Taichung Church building, I encountered many obstacles which almost stopped me from joining the group. As a result, I only made up my mind a day before departure when I had to pack up my luggage hurriedly!

On 29th July we left Kota Kinabalu for Taichung via Brunei and Bangkok. The dedication of the new magnificent G.A. building was on 2nd August attended by some 3,500 members from all over the world.

Following this, Taiwan G.A. arranged for us a guided tour to visit as many churches and places of interest as possible during our short stay there.

By 4th August, we arrived at Shih Chien Church where we were treated to a sumptuous dinner followed by a special service that evening because we were putting up for the night there.

It was here that while I was about to take a shower that I saw an old Australian brother of 88 years old slipped and fell as he was coming out of the washroom. Although I managed to catch hold of his hand before he touched the floor, it was indeed a miracle that he was not hurt. Praise the Lord for His providence.

Soon after supper I decided to retire as it was already past 11.00p.m. because I was rather tired after the tedious journey. My bed was on the upper level of a double-decker bed and, before I could recall anything, I was already fast asleep.

The first dream came by when I saw my purse suddenly slipped out from my pocket and I cried out that my purse had fallen. Then, I heard the voice of a deacon who responded quickly saying, "Over here, take it." When I took it from him I opened it and was shocked to find all my money gone. This made me groan in despair as I was very grieved. Suddenly a force engulfed me and revealed to me that those who are not willing to offer their money to the church will end up like this no matter how much their income may be. Immediately I realised I had neglected to offer as I should have done so.

Following this, the second dream took over when I saw the unfinished structure of a house with red zinc sheets on the top. At the same time, I also heard eerie voices all over the places when suddenly the red zinc sheets came crashing down on me. Before I could do anything, the upper half of a Sabah brother who now works in Kuala Lumpur emerged from behind the zinc sheets. I was very shocked and puzzled when a force revealed to me that those with ill-gotten wealth are not pleasing to God and such people are not able to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.

The third dream followed closely when I saw a fence in front of a cemetery. Then I saw a brother who had already passed away earlier this year with his son and they jumped on me. I immediately cried out, "Why are you disturbing me?" He replied saying, "I have nothing to eat." This made me recall what he said to me before his death when I used to fetch him to church in my car. I knew he was not on good terms with his daughter-in-law and had always cursed her. Following this, I felt a force which revealed to me that we should not curse anyone for those who do so will not inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.

The fourth dream suddenly took over when I realised I was in a swamp with lots of banyan roots hanging around me. I also heard very frightening voices of the devil around me. Then the head of a church deacon poked out and caught hold of my hands and started twisting and swinging me around saying, "I will break your arms and kill you, you child of Israel." His grip made me writhe in pain and I could see both my palms lengthened by a few inches. This horrible apparition was soon over when a force engulfed me and revealed that those who are proud and arrogant are not pleasing to God and such people will not inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.

The fifth and last dream soon took over the scene when two grey heads, so dreadful and terrible resembling that of dogs, one on top of the other, snaring in a ferocious manner appeared before me. I began to pray earnestly and casting them in the name of the Lord Jesus and they fell backward each time they tried to attack me. Soon a force engulfed me again and revealed to me that believers should always be alert in their prayers to prevent the devil from drawing near to them.

At this juncture, I suddenly woke up, appalled and in a state of shock while at the same time very embarrassed for interrupting others in their sleep.

May this testimony enable us to know our weaknesses and repent before the great and terrible day of the Lord. All glory and praise to the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

By Liau Tshin Choi

Written by Thomas Kam



Announcement

The publication of Manna will be temporarily ceased with effect from issue no. 21. This is to facilitate us to upgrade the standard of the magazine.

We are going to give our Manna a face-lift apart from its contents. So you will not see Manna for a good while yet.

Please bear with us.

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